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March 6, 1970

Professor Joshua Lederberg  
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Dear Professor Lederberg:

Thank you for the copy of your column for January 31st. It was fascinating. I marvel over what sort of bibliographic system you must have developed in order to retrieve and relate these bits of information.

Dalziel must be a great person. I have never had the pleasure of meeting him face to face, but have depended on his material for a long time. He, Ferris, King, and, of course, the great Kouwenhoven of Hopkins are among the great pioneers in a field about which the public knows very little. Someone ought to prepare an historical note on this work.

Your remarks about occupying "a somewhat lonely place in the academic world for having maintained a systematic interest in teaching about designing for safety" struck a responsive chord. Other professional people generally seem to regard Dalziel's type of work as not being "man's work" appropriate of notice. Yet, this subject is recently getting quite hot what with Carl Walter's pronouncement about hospital accidents along with the rise in consumer questioning. I hope the pendulum won't get out of control in its swing to the opposite direction.

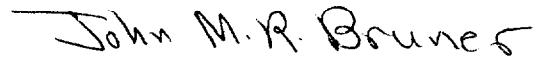
I have been looking into the GFI, and agree that it is potentially useful. However, substantial immediate progress is possible in safety through the application of existing knowledge and the use of available and inexpensive equipment. The block lies in that safe practices call for implementation of virtuous principles, otherwise known as hard work. I think that proposed "black boxes", therefore, have a negative value in that they distract attention from more appropriate activities. They become like icons, symbols of piety that confer a feeling of grace while the individual continues his same old ways.

The discussion appended to the electric bed incident should not obscure the main issue: the design of the control system was stupid, and sloppy quality control made it worse.

I am pleased to enclose a reprint of the NEJM article along with two related papers for your files.

Thank you for thinking of me.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John M. R. Bruner". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

John M. R. Bruner, M. D.

Enclosures.